

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4328
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 1087

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO DIA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, MILI, JM
SUBJECT: EMPHASIS ON HOME GUARD UNDERMINING JAMAICA DEFENSE FORCE

1. SUMMARY: THE APPARENT INTENTION OF THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT TO EXPAND THE HOME GUARD INTO A PARA-MILITARY SECURITY FORCE WITH PEOPLE'S MILITIA OVERTONES IS CONTRIBUTING SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE FURTHER EROSION OF JDF MORALE. END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE THE DECEMBER GENERAL ELECTIONS, THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT HAS MOVED TO ESTABLISH THE HOME GUARD AS A PERMANENT PARA-MILITARY FORCE WHICH SOME JAMAICANS FEAR LOOKS MARKABLY LIKE THE PEOPLE'S MILITIAS IN SOME OTHER SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. IN PAST YEARS THE HOME GUARD HAS CONSISTED PRIMARILY OF UNARMED NEIGHBORHOOD POLICE RESERVISTS NORMALLY ENLISTED ON A TEMPORARY BASIS TO COPE WITH CRIMINAL VIOLENCE IN KINGSTON. HOME GUARD MEMBERS WERE ARMED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MID- 1976 BUT CONTINUED TO

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BE NO MORE THAN A NEIGHBORHOOD POLICE AUXILIARY.

3. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS PM MANLEY ANNOUNCED THAT CONTROL OF THE HOME GUARD WOULD BE SHIFTED FROM THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY TO HIS OWN OFFICE WHERE HE APPOINTED ROY MCGANN AS PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR HOME GUARD AFFAIRS.

WITHIN WEEKS OF THAT APPOINTMENT VARIOUS PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE CLEAR THAT MANLEY INTENDED THAT THE HOME GUARD SHOULD BECOME A PERMANENT ISLAND-WIDE ORGANIZATION. UNDER MCGANN (A PNP POLITICIAN WHO ENJOYS A REPUTATION FOR ORGANIZATION AND A PENCHANT FOR VIOLENCE) THE HOME GUARD HAS ESTABLISHED AN ACTIVE RECRUITMENT PROGRAM. ALTHOUGH THE TARGETED SIZE OF THE HOME GUARD REMAINS UNCERTAIN, MCGANN ANNOUNCED ON FEB 22 THAT 10,000 APPLICATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED AND THERE WERE ALREADY 1500 ACTIVE HOME GUARD MEMBERS. HE ALSO SAID THE HOME GUARD WILL BE "RESPONSIBLE FOR BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY". MORE IMPORTANTLY HE IS ALSO QUOTED AS STATING, AT A HOME GUARD GRADUATION EXERCISE, THAT THE JDF SHOULD NO LONGER SERVE AN INTERNAL SECURITY ROLE AS A "SECOND POLICE FORCE". RATHER, IN THE FUTURE THE JDF WOULD BE ENGAGED "IN THE PRACTICAL BUILDING OF THE NATION: BUILDING RECREATION AND COMMUNITY CENTERS, PLAYING FIELDS AND AGRICULTURAL STRUCTURES". BY IMPLICATION, THE HOME GUARD WOULD TAKE OVER THE INTERNAL SECURITY FUNCTION OF THE JDF.

4. THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION WITHIN THE JDF AND ELSEWHERE THAT THE HOME GUARD IS INTENDED TO SERVE AS A POLITICALLY RELIABLE PEOPLE'S MILITIA WHICH, BY INFERENCE, WOULD SERVE AS A COUNTER-WEIGHT TO THE TRADITIONALLY APOLITICAL AND PROFESSIONAL JDF. IT MAY BE INTENDED TO GO EVEN FURTHER. ASIDE

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FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOME GUARD, THE GOJ HAS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS SUCCESSFULLY ERODED THE PROFESSIONALISM OF THE JDF BY MANIPULATING POLITICAL PROMOTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS WITHIN THE JDF. THE POLITICALIZATION PROCESS HAS BEEN FURTHER HASTENED BY THE EMIGRATION OR INTENDED EMIGRATION OF A NUMBER OF MIDDLE AND UPPER ECHELON JDF OFFICERS-- MOST OF THE LATTER ARE OF MIDDLE CLASS ORIGINS AND HAVE LITTLE OR NO SYMPATHY FOR THE SOCIAL-IST ASPIRATIONS OF THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT. UNDOUBTEDLY THE SUCCESSFUL ESTABLISHMENT OF A HIGHLY POLITICAL AND COMPETING HOME GUARD WILL HASTEN THE JDF'S DECAY.

5. THE JDF'S CONCERN IN THIS SITUATION ARE SHARED BY MANY OTHERS SINCE SPECULATION HAS IT, INCORRECTLY OR NOT, THAT THE HOME GUARD WILL BE DESIGNED TO FURTHER, THROUGH INTIMIDATION AND OTHER TRADITIONAL LEFTIST TECHNIQUES, THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE RADICAL FACTION OF THE PNP GOVERNMENT. THIS

SPECULATION HAS BEEN GIVEN WEIGHT BY VIRTURE OF THE HOME GUARD RECRUITMENT PROGRAM. THE LATTER SEEMS DESIGNED TO EXCLUDE ALL BUT PNP POLITICAL ACTIVISTS --MANY OF WHOM HAVE A RECORD OF POLITICAL AND CRIMINAL VIOLENCE.

6. COUNTERBALANCING THE FOREGOING CONCERNS, THE FACT REMAINS THAT AS POLITICALIZED AS THEY MAY BE, THE POLICE AND THEY ARMY REMAIN RELATIVELY PROFESSIONAL AND WELL ARMED, COMPARED TO THE HOME GUARD AT THIS TIME. MOREOVER, THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 5,000 SERVING POLICE AND APPROXIMATELY 2,400 IN THE JDF (INCLUDING ONE RESERVE BATTALION). THE CURRENT 1,500 MEMBERS OF THE HOME GUARD, BY WAY OF CONTRAST, HAVE HAD LITTLE TRAINING AND ARE ARMED ONLY WITH REVOLVERS. GIVEN JAMAICA'S CURRENT INTERNAL SECURITY REQUIREMENTS, I.E., KEEPING THE LID ON THE

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ISLAND WITH RISING UNEMPLOYMENT AND LOOMING FOOD SHORTAGES, IT WOULD SEEM THAT THERE IS NO PROACTICAL WAY THE HOME GUARD CAN TAKE OVER THE ARMY'S SECURITY FUNCTION IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. RATHER, AND MORE LIKELY, THE HOME GUARD WILL EMERGE IN THE SHORT TERM AS A POLITICAL STRONG ARM FORCE.

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